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Noted by Del.
WE

18 June 1964

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Thoughts on the Stick and Carrot Approach Toward Communist China

We are all for imaginative thinking which looks beyond immediate Far East problems and policies, but we consider that the circumstances assumed do not constitute propitious grounds for embarking on a rewarding US course of action. In fact, the course would probably not only fail to produce its desired rapprochement with Communist China, but would be likely to embroil the US in more troublesome relations with Communist China -- and with the USSR -- than is now the case. We outline below our principal objections to the line of argument implicit in the assumptions, noting that these judgments apply to the present and foreseeable leadership in Peiping, and not to some distant generation of possible successors.

1. Communist China would not be receptive to the idea of rapprochement.

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a. This judgment would certainly apply in the event the US had attacked bases and supply routes in Southern China. Peiping would consider itself at war with the US, and years would probably have to pass before a rapprochement could be effected.

b. The judgment would also apply even if the US had not attacked China, but only the DRV. Having attacked the DRV, the US would have provoked a major Far East crisis. China, even if it had not intervened militarily against the US, would certainly be assisting the DRV and beating the drum against us. Rapprochement would not flower in such a setting.

c. In any case, it takes two to effect rapprochement. A switch of US policy would be only part of the prerequisites, and would almost certainly not change the fact that to the Chinese Communists, we are the enemy by definition and not because of what we do.

2. A critical factor militating against rapprochement from the Chinese side would be Peiping's need for the image of the US as the external enemy, the scapegoat for the regime's frustrations and the stimulus for domestic Chinese unity and discipline. A sudden Chinese reversal of course to rapprochement would confuse the party apparatus and the public and almost certainly intensify

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already difficult control problems. The aid program would involve US technical assistance, thus confounding the regime's extreme suspicion to date of foreigners. In short, these domestic considerations would in themselves probably be sufficient to preclude any Chinese Communist receptiveness to US-initiated rapprochement efforts.

3. We cannot be optimistic about Chinese willingness to reduce pressures on Southeast Asia, even given feasible inducements. In the very best of circumstances, the most that could reasonably be expected would be Chinese pressure on Hanoi to slow down the pace of insurrection in Laos and South Vietnam for a while until new and more promising circumstances arose. If, as seems more likely, the very best of circumstances did not apply, we should expect little Chinese give on Southeast Asia and, hence, little rapprochement. Although the Chinese give the DRV general support and urge a strenuous pace of insurrectionary activity on Hanoi's leaders, it has yet to be established that Communist effort to subvert Southeast Asia is a Chinese Communist show, or, indeed, that there is a definite and direct link between Peiping's wishes and the execution of Communist policy in the Laos and South Vietnamese countrysides. Central to the foreign policy of Communist China are its aspirations to extend Communist influence -- and that of China -- in Southeast Asia and to remove US power and

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influence from that area in the process. We see no forces in the given assumptions sufficient to compel China to give up these aspirations.

4. Nor is the proposition valid that Peiping now "focuses" its attention on Southeast Asia, but might change that "focus" northward to the USSR. China has active aspirations even now in both directions and would so continue. There would be no need for Peiping to give up its southward aspirations, certainly not for an area so inviting by reason of its historic interest to China, its readily exploitable weaknesses, and its economic attractiveness -- considerations which apply with much less force to Soviet Siberia and Mongolia. In fact, in some respects, the greater China's conflict were with the Soviet Union, the greater might be the inducements of an activist Chinese effort in Southeast Asia.

5. The thesis that a plebiscite would "dispose" of the Taiwan problem is a flimsy proposition indeed.

a. We are not aware of any report to the effect that Mao would accept a plebiscite.

b. In any event, it is almost certain that he would accept no outcome of a plebiscite which did not provide for the transfer of Taiwan and its population to his effective control.

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Mao and the Chinese Communist leaders have consistently held the acquisition of Taiwan, in their terms, "the completion of the revolution," to be a central objective of their regime. Even in the unlikely event that they made a deal with Chiang Kai-shek which provided for an "autonomous" Taiwan, the arrangement would be a phony which at best delayed the full exercise of Communist sovereignty over the island.

c. Chiang would almost certainly not permit a plebiscite to be held, anyway.

d. Even if one were held, an opting for the Communists would almost certainly be the least likely result. Assuming that a reasonably fair polling could be held, one which included the Taiwanese, the order of preference concerning Taiwan's future would probably be: independence, international protectorate of some kind, Japanese control, GRC control, and, lastly, mainland control.

6. The objectives of the proposed rapprochement are not very clear. It looks as if the objectives of the course must be (a) to reduce markedly Communist pressures on Southeast Asia, (b) to dispose of the tricky Taiwan problem, and (c) to exploit the Sino-Soviet split. These are most worthy objectives. They are also terribly ambitious, especially three at one blow. But

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why try this via this particular rapprochement scheme? Is it because we must pay this price to get the Communists to stand down their assault on Southeast Asia? Or is this really the only way we can solve the anomaly of a fugitive GRC on an offshore island? Or, do we do this because we fear coming world isolation on the China problem. Or, for some other combination of motives not given us?

7. In sum, the US would stand to lose considerably, and on a number of fronts, from having tried such a rapprochement.

a. The US reversal of course would dispirit mainland Southeast Asia and open it up to added Communist gains.

b. The course would also almost certainly stimulate Japanese accommodations with Peiping and lessen US influence in Japan and the ROK.

c. US firmness to date has been a major factor contributing to Sino-Soviet discord. Removal of that firmness toward China would not necessarily drive China back toward the USSR, but might lead Moscow to feel that it could, and should, move farther down the road toward rapprochement with the Chinese than could the US.

d. We would not have advanced US-Soviet rapprochement, but Soviet suspicions of the US.

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e. We could not expect to reap world applause for our new acceptance of mainland China. Any beneficial effects resulting from greater US acceptance of China would be dampened in much of the world by our having attacked China or the DRV in the first place, and by our subsequently reducing the firmness which alone has protected East Asia from potential Chinese Communist aggression -- and for which many governments and peoples are grateful even if they don't admit it.

f. The US course would also confirm the Chinese Communists in their present estimates of US staying power and of the proper way to push revolution in the world. For what it's worth, we would be further undercutting Soviet restraining influences among CP's in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and giving a fillip to Chinese-inspired irresponsibility among various raggle-tailed revolutionaries.

g. Meanwhile, back at the Mekong, our troops might well be bogged down, maldeployed, in inconclusive brush wars.

h. Finally, even though a majority of the American public probably now favors, or would accept, a rapprochement of some kind with Communist China, this particular scheme -- with its vistas of money disappearing into the vast needs of a triumphant enemy China -- would be a tough one indeed to sell the US.

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These criticisms do not mean that we consider present policy lines to be ideal, or that there might not be some merit in exploring some regularization of relations with mainland China. There is a vast area of US maneuver between the assumed course given us and our present one, however, and it is between these extremities that there is room for much more sober, realistic, and rewarding US tactics than those proposed.

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From Sherman Kent

To: The Director.

This is a first cut at Mrs Luce's proposition.

We are going on to conjure up a straw man of our own - & hopefully a more robust one.

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